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TO RUEHAAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT IMMEDIATE 8788

INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 6355

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 158849

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2017

TAGS: US EAIR MARR MCAP MOPS PREL TX

SUBJECT: LOSS OF RESTRICTED BLANKET OVERFLIGHT AND LANDING  
CLEARANCE FOR TURKMENISTAN

REF: ASHGABAT 1255

Classified By: SCA/CEN A/OFFICE DIRECTOR KURT DONNELLY FOR REASONS  
1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 2.

¶2. (C) Summary and Action Request: Reftel notes that the Government of Turkmenistan (GOTX) has notified post by diplomatic note that it will not renew the blanket overflight and clearance request number 999c, which will expire November 30. After that date, the U.S. will have to request individual permission for transiting aircraft, with ten days advance notice, and will have to itemize the cargo. This is a sudden change in our cooperation and caught us by surprise. In 2007, we estimate that we will conduct about 1600 overflights of Turkmenistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The denial of blanket authorization threatens our ability to support operations in Afghanistan. This is a critical issue for the United States. Charge is requested to meet with Foreign Minister Meredov and draw on the background information in para 3 to emphasize the critical importance of blanket overflight authorization and request that the Government of Turkmenistan renew the authorization. Charge should inquire if the Government has specific concerns and assure that the U.S. is prepared to address them, but explain that the lapsing of the agreement on November 30 does not allow adequate time to respond. End Summary and Action Request.

¶3. (SBU) Background: Renewal of Blanket Overflight Authorization

-- The Blanket Overflight Authorization is critical for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. This year, we estimate that we will conduct 1600 overflights. In this way, Turkmenistan has been making an important contribution to the stability of Afghanistan.

-- The success of Operation Enduring Freedom is important for Turkmenistan.

-- The new procedure represents a setback to Turkmenistan's support of regional stability and humanitarian operations.

-- Without the Blanket Authorization, we understand we would need to provide 10 days prior notice for each flight. This would severely limit our ability to maintain critical supplies for Afghanistan. Moreover, even a fraction of the notifications would place an enormous burden on our embassy and Turkmenistan government resources.

-- Another important element of the authorization is that it allows us to perform emergency medevacs. Losing that

capability would be especially troubling.

-- Turkmenistan provides essential "gas and go" support for long-haul aircraft flying to Afghanistan. The elimination of blanket overflight will adversely affect this mission-critical support as well, as such aircraft may seek alternate routing avoiding Turkmenistan. If so, this could adversely affect Turkmenistan's interests, as it will lose the fuel revenue and miscellaneous fees associated with these missions.

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